

Louis Bevier House(1698)
(Eltinge House from 1740)
New Paltz, New York

HABS No. NY-4-304

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THE BEVIER-ELTING HOUSE
Huguenot Street and Broadhead Avenue, New Paltz,
Ulster County, New York.

Historical Introduction

The Bevier-Elting House is one of five original detached stone houses standing to date, erected by the early settlers of New Paltz who originally came from Old Hurley. On the west wall of the house facing Huguenot Street there is a painted board marker, reading:

"Bevier House
1698 - 1735
Elting House
1735 - 1923."

Conversation with Mrs. Lanetta Elting DuBois (who is a direct descendant and one of the nine members of the Elting family owning an interest in the house) brought out the fact that it is the intention of the group to preserve without change the old house, as long as a majority of the owners are interested in doing so.

Jessie Elting (father of Mrs. Dubois, mentioned) had a keen interest in the preservation of the old houses on Huguenot Street, and it is through him that this and other houses were saved from destruction. He purchased this house (deed on record) from Jessie M. Elting, who was considering at that time the clearing of the site for a new building.

Mrs. DuBois referred to LeFever's History of New Paltz in pointing out that Josiah Elting purchased the house about 1735, which date it is said, could be seen on the rear chimney wall of the middle portion, so it would seem that the original house on Huguenot Street and the middle portion were built

by Bevier and the rear addition by the Eltings some time after their taking possession of the property.

Roeliff J. E. Elting used the front portion of the house as a store for some time before the Revolution and it continued to be used as such by his son and grandsons until about 1805. Old inhabitants informed Mrs. Dubois that they remembered seeing as late as 1830 the old hoist beam projecting from the gable wall over the door. The door frame has been filled in to serve as a window as shown.

The Elting family lived in the house until 1820 or 1825, after which it was rented up to the time of purchase by Jessie Elting. Since then, descendants of the family occupy it during the summer months.

Architectural Description

This house is built of stone, white-washed over, and from the appearance of exposed faces free of white-wash, it seems that field stone and open quarry ledge stone have been used. Some faces showing weather conditions and others ^{are} flat with the rusty brown and quartz surface, called "cat facings". They are found in the vertical seams of local quarry ledges in this region. The smoke chambers and chimney stacks are of thin brick whose size averages $3\frac{1}{2}" \times 8" \times 1\frac{1}{4}"$.

The walls are built up in the usual manner, laid on natural beds in mortar composed of clay and straw. The joints are pointed with lime and sand mortar. The foundation walls are a little thicker and built to the top of the first tier of timbers. At this point the building is set back 1" to 2", thus forming an irregular water table around the building, following the various floor levels as shown. This wash is finished with a

lime and sand mortar. The side walls are built of stone to the plate, and in the gable are carried up to the line of the cross tie and heads of gable frames.

The building distinctly shows three periods of construction evidenced by two stone cross walls inside the building and vertical joints showing in the outside walls coincide with these

There is also a variation in size of plates and timbers used, though the last addition must have been completed before 1750 to 1760 as the type of construction is very much alike and other than repairs, little change or remodeling has been done. No modern conveniences have been installed, other than a sink in the first floor middle room, which is used as a temporary kitchen with an oil stove.

It would ¹ seem ^{that} the lean-to porch roof was built on the north side when the middle portion of building was added and was for the protection of the two outside entrance doors, No. 1 and No. 6, as well as affording a space for temporary storage when supplies were delivered. This porch is floored with stone flagging.

On sheet #8 and 9, the section through attic shows the sturdy rafters squared with broad-ax and tapering in dimension from plate to ridge; these are framed and pinned together as shown on detail sheet #8. Those for the porch are smaller and rest in a notch in the plate to which they are secured.

The diagonal windbracing of the middle and rear portion of the house with split poles is interesting. These poles

are secured at the crossing of each rafter with hand-made nails.

There are no signs that indicate that this portion of the attic was used for anything but storage.

The room built in the west end over the living room was added after the store was discontinued. The wall and ceiling stud between the tie-beams are about 2" by 4" of more uniform size and denote a later date.

The west end of the building was built about 1698 and has a cellar with an earthen floor, and with two small windows - one on each side - and the one door (#2 on the plan) was the outside cellar entrance at that time. There is a ladder stair still standing in the southwest corner giving inside access to the room above.

In the east wall of the cellar, about three feet above the floor, large flat stones, or flags, 5" to 6" thick, were laid in the wall and left projecting about 5". On this rests the bottom ends of four pieces of oak, size 6" by 6". These lay at an angle with the top resting against the first beam out of the east wall (size 11" by 12½" oak and the largest in the house). Over the small beams are laid 2" to 3" thick rough oak plank 12" or more in width and on this is built the stone foundation to take the overhang of the chimney and hearth in the room over. See section sheet #9.

The room over, was no doubt first used as a living room, later as a store by the Eltings and again as a living room as it is today. Some changes were made in the original fireplace which is now finished with splayed brick jambs built

against the stone wall, an open joint showing at this point. This has a fire-place crane instead of the trammel bar.

It is believed by members of the Elting family living, that the original fire-place had only a hood at the ceiling opening to a large smoke chamber, the front of which appears to rest on the large beam at the line of the attic floor as shown in the section. The legs may have been built in later and the breast and jambs walled up, plastered and fitted with the plain mantel facing and shelf shown. The original fire-place hearth was, no doubt, of stone or brick -- this has been replaced recently with cement. The floor of this room is almost level with the street grade and convenient for store purposes.

In the southwest corner is built a steep stair to the attic. This is enclosed with wide boards painted. The top of the door closing the foot of the stairs is notched to clear the wall beam and no jamb piece is used on the wall side to receive the door. There is a door to the cellar stair which is directly under and in the side wall a small cupboard door is fitted in. This has fine old butterfly hinges shown in the detail.

The attic room, as before mentioned, was partitioned off later at which time the granary door was fitted in as a window.

The middle portion, added about 1835, providing basement kitchen and the room directly over was probably used by the Bevier family for bedrooms. There is no fireplace on this first floor, only a stove pipe hole showing on the east chimney wall.

Under the kitchen floor, there is a sub-cellar reached

through a trap-door, as indicated on the plan and section. This was termed the "dungeon" by some of the local inhabitants who believed it was used to hide runaway slaves during the Civil War; others, that it was simply a storage space. This sub-cellar has only a 3' - 7" ceiling with wood beams supporting the floor over. The space is 8 feet wide by 12 feet long, enclosed with stone retaining walls built within the line of the house foundations.

The kitchen fire-place is most interesting, built with square stone jambs and a vertical back wall with a heavy pine log lintel chamfered on the back supporting the masonry over. The front and back hearths are of stone flag and the original iron bar is still in the smoke chamber wall from which hangs the old trammel iron that held pots and utensils over the fire.

In the back wall on the left side of the fire-place is the old bake-even opening. This has a stone sill with brick arch as shown. The oven has been destroyed. This projected beyond the outside of the wall as indicated by the dotted line on the section sheet No. 9, where repairs show this filled in and walled up with stone, flush with the outside of the chimney. The walls of this room are thinly covered with lime plaster following the wavy contour of the stone, and now finished with a buff color muresco or other wall wash finish.

Door No. 1 gives access to the outside area on the west. A stair well opening between the ceiling beams show where the original ladder stair gave access to the room over and on the first floor this well shows filled in.

The old board partition enclosing this well with door at one end now provides a closet.

The latter or last addition built on by the Eltings provided additional bedroom space on the first floor, and in the basement room^{of} this addition we find the stone walls are finished off with a much thicker and smoother coat of lime plaster than that on the kitchen walls. Portions of the old flagstone floor still remain and this was likely used as the family provision and milk room. The older front cellar, also accessible from the kitchen^{was} used for winter storage of vegetables and general supplies for both family and for sale in the store.

The side walls throughout the first floor are plastered directly on the stone with clay, using straw as a binder. This is covered with lime, probably many coats of white-wash.

The floor beams in the cellar and basement are mostly of oak, varying in size. These run cross-wise in the front and middle portion of the house. In the rear addition they run in the opposite direction, and are smaller and more uniform in size, being about 7" by 7" for the first floor and for attic floor 6" to 7" wide and 9" to 10" high. The weight of storage in the attic would seem to be the reason for these being heavier.

Pine timbers were used mostly for the attic floor; these also vary in size as shown, with a smaller beam always laid in wall projecting 1" to 3" to which the ends of the floor boards were nailed.

Throughout the house all floor beams are exposed and the floor boards form the finished ceilings of the rooms below.

The old flooring remains throughout the house, much of it badly worn and in need of repair. The boards average $1\frac{1}{2}$ " thick, the widths varying from 15" to 17". Edges are splined and all are nailed to the beams with hand-made spikes. They are laid in about 14 foot lengths with ends cut on line with one beam and short pieces used one side to finish the width of room as shown on attic plan.

The windows and doors have heavy oak frames mortised and pinned at the corners, the head pieces forming the lintel support for the masonry over. For door openings, the reveal from frame to face of plaster is, in most cases, finished with wood and the edges moulded. The jamb piece on door No. 4 has an interesting moulding run near edge shown on detail sheet 10. Some windows have the reveal in plaster, others are wood.

Door No. 8 on hall side has a moulded pine cornice head and the same head is used over the two bedroom windows of the east wall. Over door No. 8 on the living room side, a scar in the plaster shows where a similar head has been removed. These were common in the early Dutch houses in this neighborhood.

The top sash in all double-hung frames are fixed. Bottom sash slide up flat against the other without a parting strip. These are held up with pegs or wood catches when open.

An original sash was found in a window on the south wall with a heavy muntin and glass held in by a wood strip as shown on sheet #6. Another window on the south wall has a top sash three lights high, with the bottom sash two lights with detail of muntin shown. All but the one sash have no doubt been replaced at some time.

Door No. 1 has moulded panels inside and flush butt and beaded joints showing outside. The owner stated that this was taken from another house by her father. The stile was pieced out and the rails cut off to fit the old frame and pieces were built in the panels to afford a flush surface to receive the strap hinges which are probably from the original door. The original door, no doubt, was a Dutch battehdooor, same as the north side door #6 which is typical and has a similar frame.

Door No. 8 is an interesting batten door with vertical pieces filled in forming two large panels on the batten side to the hall -- this is fitted with a drop handle not usual on inside doors.

Door No. 3 has an interesting mould at the bottom joint on the board side.

Other doors throughout were of this batten type and usually made of three boards of varying widths. Again it is interesting to note that the interior room doors are usually made up of three boards of varying widths and more often the narrow board is set in the center as in door #8, sheet 10; and door No. 7, sheet 9. The battens are nailed on and the nails are clinched staple fashion, flush with the grain of the wood, showing very little under the paint. All were originally fitted with hand forged strap hinges and latch fittings. The drop handle is more usually found on the outside double Dutch door and thumb lift handles on the interior doors.

Some of the original shutters remain on the west wall windows. On sheet 6 is shown one with single wide boards and broad battens (detail D). These have the Dutch type strap

hinge and sill hooks which held the shutter back when open -- when closed the hooks hung down from the sill. The shutters on the west wall window are somewhat different and have been poorly repaired to fit the opening. These are hung on a strap of good design with a twisted sill hook as shown on sheet 11.

Original pieces of the early hand forged gutter irons and hardware fitments made by a local blacksmith, were found in use on doors #2 - 3 - 4 - 6 and 8; some are shown on full size detail sheet No. 11. Two examples of the latter type Norfolk latch handles are also shown on this sheet. These are early patterns, stocked to some extent and could be purchased like other merchandise.

The old well on the north side is shown as restored. An earlier photograph shows this with a square boxing with two post and a cross arm from which hung a wheel over which the well rope ran. This may have been restored with a sweep by someone having a knowledge of the original well fittings.

Written May 26, 1934, by

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ADDENDUM TO:
BEVIER-ELTING HOUSE
Hugenot Street & Broadhead Avenue
New Paltz
Ulster
New York

HABS NY-4-304
NY,56-NEWP,2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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